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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7151
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1620
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4515
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2053
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1161
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA 0117
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3564
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0463
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 003236

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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, DRL/PHD, EAP/ANP
NSC FOR EPHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/23/2017

TAGS: PGOV PINS ASEC ID

SUBJECT: NORTH MALUKU -- WINNER NAMED IN ELECTION; ETHNIC
TENSIONS FLARE

REF: JAKARTA 3224 AND PREVIOUS

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4 (b-d).

¶1. (U) This message was coordinated with Consulate General
Surabaya.

¶2. (C) SUMMARY: Three days after overturning the result of
the gubernatorial election in North Maluku province in
Eastern Indonesia, the National Electoral Commission (KPU)
handed victory to opposition candidate Abdul Gafur, an
experienced pol. Police have tightened security in the
provincial capital in anticipation of possible ethnic-based
clashes between supporters of Gafur and the incumbent
governor. While North Maluku is a small, relatively remote
province, the specter of ethnic clashes and poor electoral
administration resonate as serious problems for Jakarta. END
SUMMARY.

UPSET IN THE SPICE ISLANDS

¶3. (C) Jakarta has picked a winner in a controversial
election. On November 22, the national electoral commission
announced that Golkar party candidate, Abdul Gafur, had won
North Maluku province's first ever direct gubernatorial
election. The election took place on November 3 under a
cloud of controversy created by the local KPU branch's
alleged favoritism for the incumbent governor, who was
expected to win the race. KPU earlier in the week overturned
a narrow victory in favor of Thaib and--in an unprecedented
move--took charge of the vote recount process in Jakarta.
The swift intervention, which handed victory to Gafur by less
than 3,000 votes, came three days before the end of Thaib's
term in office.

¶4. (C) The Jakarta-based recount was witnessed by officials
representing each of the four candidates that contested the
election, as well as members of the local electoral
commission and the election supervisory commission. Thaib's
representative, Saiful Ahmad, refused to sign the final
verdict. Endang Sulastri, one of the seven newly installed

KPU commissioners, who attended the November 22 session, told poloff that KPU's intervention was justified under article 122 paragraph 3 of the 2007 election law (UU 22, 2007), which allows for national intervention if the local electoral board cannot carry out its duties. Saiful Ahmad has indicated that Thaib's camp will likely appeal the case to the Supreme Court on the grounds that the national KPU did not have the right to annul the result of the local commission.

TENSION IN PARADISE

15. (C) Security forces are on alert for possible communal violence in North Maluku. Police in the provincial capital of Ternate tightened security in anticipation of clashes between supporters of Thaib (who is supported by the Makian ethnic group) and Gafur (who is supported by most of the other ethnic groups) by setting up roadblocks across the city. As of November 23, local press indicated the situation remained calm and only small demonstrations were underway. Thaib's supporters have staged several moderate sized demonstrations in Ternate and Jakarta, but have not been involved in any violent incidents. Observers report that ethnic-based tensions are flaring, however.

HE'S EXPERIENCED

16. (C) Gafur, the winner as of this point, is an experienced pol. For him, the KPU decision represents a bit of redemption. In 2002, Gafur was elected governor by the provincial assembly, only to have the result overturned due to alleged money politics. Then President Megawati installed Thaib instead.

17. (SBU) Born in 1939 on Halmahera, the largest island in North Maluku, Gafur is a member of the Golkar old guard. A student leader in the 1960s, Gafur led demonstrations against

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then President Sukarno that helped bring Suharto to power. Gafur first served in government in 1972 as a member of the military's parliamentary faction. In the 1980s, he became Indonesia's first ever Minister for Youth and Sports. After failing to win the governorship in 2002, Gafur was elected to parliament in the 2004 general election.

REVERBERATIONS

18. (C) North Maluku is a small, relatively remote province. Its gubernatorial election--if it had gone smoothly--probably would have received little notice. However, the way the situation has proceeded has sparked two major concerns, which could resonate down the line. First, as an ethnically-divided area, the election has raised real fears of communal violence. The region has recovered strongly from the ethno-religious conflict between 1999-2001 that left thousands dead. A relapse would be tragic and very damaging to the region. Second, although the vast majority of Indonesian elections have proceeded smoothly since the advent of democracy, the local body administering this one failed completely in its duties. Jakarta--which has acted responsibly--will have to learn the lessons and move to avoid a repeat elsewhere or further problems could flare.

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